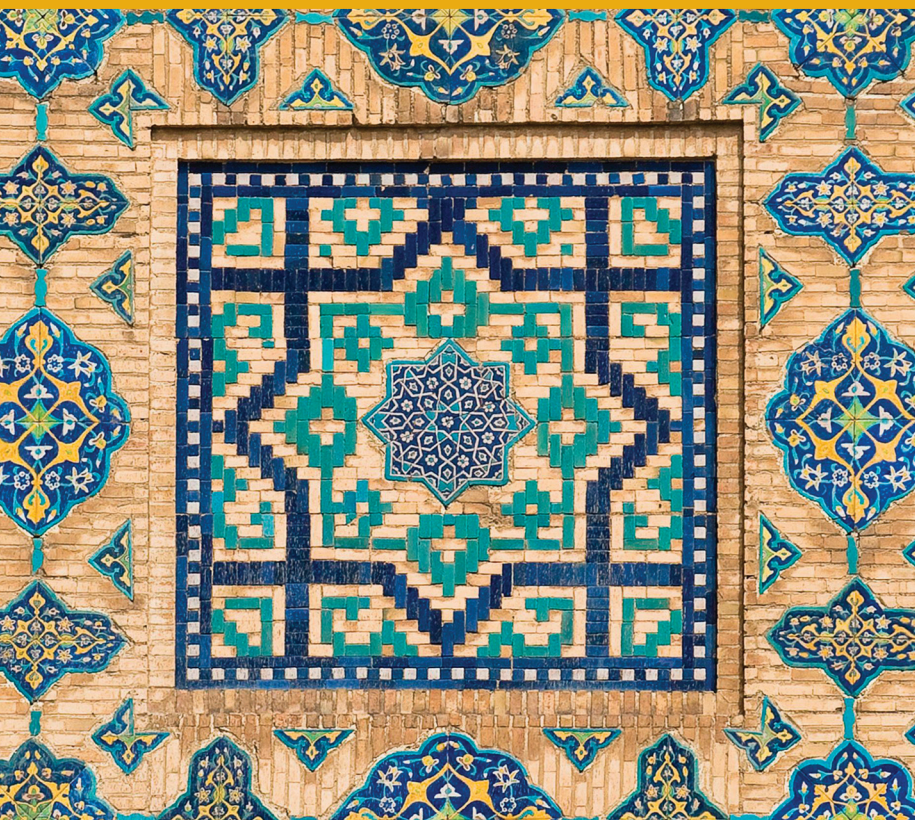


Discover Islam

MANIFESTO OF PEACE

MAULANA WAHIDUDDIN KHAN





*In the name of Allah
The Merciful, the Compassionate*

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A Manifesto of Peace

Peace is the only religion for both—man and the universe. In a peaceful environment all good things are possible, whereas in the absence of peace, we cannot achieve anything of a positive nature, either as individuals, or as a community. The same holds true at national and international levels.

What is Peace?

Scholars have defined peace thus: “Peace is the absence of war.” This definition is absolutely correct. Peace in fact means the absence of a situation of war or violence.

However, some people hold this definition of peace to be inadequate. They say that peace should be accompanied by justice; that peace devoid of justice is no peace. But setting such a condition for the attainment of peace is impractical. This is because peace on its own does not bring justice. That is, justice is not necessarily an element of peace. What peace does, in actual fact, is open up opportunities.

It creates favourable conditions that would enable us to strive for justice and other constructive ends. Peace is always desirable for its own sake. Everything else comes after peace, not along with peace.

The Hudaybiya Peace Treaty

The Prophet of Islam provides a very clear historical example in his method of negotiating of the Hudaybiya peace treaty. On this occasion he brought matters to a successful conclusion by unilaterally accepting the conditions of his opponents. In this peace treaty, the Prophet had not apparently received justice or his rights. What was in effect a 10-year no-war pact, gave the Prophet an opportunity to work uninterruptedly on a constructive programme which would otherwise have been impossible. By means of this peaceful non-political programme the Prophet and his companions were able to consolidate themselves so thoroughly that they had no need to wage war: their opponents were left with no option but to surrender.

This Hudaybiya peace treaty of the Prophet of Islam was like a peace 'bomb', in the sense that its positive effects spread far and wide. The result of this treaty shows that the peace 'bomb' is mightier than the violent bomb. A peace 'bomb' means life, and a violent bomb means death. A peace 'bomb' leads to construction, while a violent bomb leads

to destruction. Likewise, a peace ‘bomb’ brings progress, while a violent bomb brings annihilation. Peace enhances creativity, whereas violence does the very opposite. The power of a peace ‘bomb’ is based on love, while that of a violent bomb is based on hatred. The capacity of a peace ‘bomb’ is unlimited, while that of a violent bomb is limited.

Some Historical Examples

Japan’s industrial cities, Hiroshima and Nagasaki, were destroyed by the atom bombs in 1945. After the holocaust, Japan abandoned violence and adopted a peaceful course which it termed a reverse course for its national development. And as a result within forty years, Japan rapidly became a great economic power of the world.

We find a very interesting example of a peaceful method in India. India’s freedom struggle was started in 1857. But, even after more than 60 years of sacrifice, the desired political goal remained a distant dream. Then, in 1920, Gandhi emerged as the leader of the freedom struggle. Taking a U-turn, he abandoned the violent method and opted for a peaceful course of action for the freedom movement.

Things took a miraculous turn after that, with the British Empire becoming paralysed: a non-violent

Gandhi had taken away from the British any justification for the use of violence. The following anecdote is an apt illustration. When Gandhi launched his freedom movement by following a peaceful method instead of resorting to violent means, a British officer sent a telegram to his secretariat in these words:

“Kindly wire instructions how to kill a tiger non-violently.”

Therefore the success which was not forthcoming, even after a long and violent struggle, was achieved by peaceful methods in a short period of time.

Peace—A Complete Code of Conduct

Violence and peace both have wide connotations. Violence includes everything from hatred to war. The same is true of peace, which includes everything from tolerance to love. Violence and peace are both the results of human thinking. Those who engage in violent activities are the worst people in this world, while those who opt for peaceful behaviour are the best. Peace means normalcy, and normalcy provides all such opportunities as favour the growth of a healthy environment. A natural condition should prevail, where people can live and work without any external hindrance.

Violence closes the doors to positive activities, while peace opens the doors to healthy activities. It creates an atmosphere of positive living for the individual, society and the nation at large. All kinds of achievements are possible in an environment of peace. If violent situations hamper opportunities, peace helps favourable situations to flourish, where man's creative abilities can be nurtured and developed.

While peace is a boon for human society, violence is a curse. Peace is an asset, and violence is a liability. Peace is love and violence is hatred. Peace is amity and violence is enmity. Peace brings people closer and violence distances them. Peace fosters a high level of human culture and helps it to flourish, whereas violence breeds a jungle culture. Peace elevates humanity to the level of civilized social existence, whereas violence causes a descent into barbarism. Peace promotes life, while violence is the harbinger of death and destruction. Peace brings the good elements of a society into prominence, while violence does the very opposite.

Christ once said, "Love your enemy." This means, live with your enemy peacefully, i.e. win over your enemy by using the power of peace. Human history testifies to the fact that peace affords everything, while violence yields nothing.

Peace Turns Minus into Plus

According to a German psychologist, Alfred Adler, a unique quality possessed by human beings is 'their power to turn a minus into a plus'. What enables man to perform this extraordinary feat? The only answer is that it is through peace. The human brain is a treasure house of unlimited power. If man loses his peace of mind at a time of crisis, he is not in a position to utilize his mental capacity in a positive way. Negative thinking is an obstacle to human development, while positive thinking is like a life-giver in that it stimulates human capacities. Therefore, when an individual or a nation is able to maintain peace in every situation, infinite possibilities open up. This is when minus can be turned into plus. Here I would like to present two examples to illustrate this point. One is of a societal nature and the other of an individual nature.

A very prominent, historical example of turning one's minus into plus is provided by the Prophet of Islam. In his famous book *The 100* Dr. Michael Hart of America has observed: "Muhammad was the only man in history who was supremely successful at both the religious and secular levels."

How was the Prophet of Islam able to achieve this supreme success? The secret lies in the fact that though he repeatedly faced moments of crisis in his

mission, he never lost his peace of mind. As such he was able to respond positively, even in negative situations. By avoiding confrontation and availing of opportunities, it became possible for him to convert his disadvantage into advantage. The British writer, E.E. Kellett, has thus described this achievement of the Prophet:

“He faced adversity with the determination to wring success out of failure.”

The whole life of the Prophet was a practical example of this principle.

Swami Vivekanand, an Indian saint, was once invited to the home of one of his friends, who wanted to test his mettle. When the Swami arrived, he was ushered into a room where the sacred scriptures of all major religious traditions were placed on a table, one on top of the other. The arrangement was such that the Gita, the Hindu religious scripture, was placed at the bottom, and other religious scriptures placed on top of it. Swamiji's friend was sure that he would be provoked on seeing this arrangement. So he drew the Swami's attention to the books placed on the table, and asked him to comment. Swamiji simply smiled and said:

‘The foundation is really good.’ This successful

response from the Swamiji was due to the fact that his peace of mind was not disturbed.

The Way to Attain Peace

Peace is essential for a better way of living—peace of mind, peace in the family and peace in nature. Today, in our modern, technological world, man apparently has access to everything he desires. In the absence of peace, however, everything has been rendered meaningless. What is needed to redress the balance is love, compassion, tolerance, forbearance and the spirit of co-existence.

How can we attain peace? The formula is very simple. Take your share without usurping that of others. Fulfill your needs without depriving others of theirs. Satisfy your desires without thwarting others and fulfil your ambitions without denying others the right to do likewise. In short, solve your own problems without creating problems for your fellow creatures. Peaceful co-existence is the only way of existence in this world.

However, a peaceful life can be achieved only when human beings learn what their limitations ought to be. According to the Divine law, you can take from the world whatever will satisfy your need—not your greed. You may do business with others but you

may not exploit them. You may also establish your individuality, but not at the cost of the family and society. In daily existence, you may lead your life by maintaining social structures and tradition and not by destroying them. You have the freedom to lead your own life, but by caring in the process for the rest of your society and not by neglecting it. Resources may be utilized for the benefit of humanity, but not for the sake of exploitation. You are free to use peaceful methods, but you are not entitled to use violence. You can make use of nature, but only by maintaining its balance: the equilibrium of nature must never be upset. You have the freedom to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, but not to manufacture destructive weapons. You are at liberty to nurture feelings of love and compassion, but not to give way to hatred and prejudice. You are free to fulfil your physical desires, but not by spiritually killing your soul. In short, you have the freedom to enjoy life by sharing with others, but certainly not by eliminating them.

Price of Peace

We cannot have anything in this world without paying for it. Everything has its price and this is particularly true of peace. If we want peace, we should be ready to pay for it or stand deprived of it. What is the price of peace? It is simply tolerance. We live in

a world of differences, and these differences cannot be eliminated. Therefore, we have only two options before us: adopting the policy of either tolerance or intolerance. While the latter leads to violence, the former ensures peace. Where there is tolerance there is peace, and where there is intolerance, there is war and violence. There is only one universal formula of tolerance for peace, and this same formula may be successfully applied to one's family life and to social life, as well as at the international level. Peace requires us to foster a culture of tolerance, for intolerance can lead only to war.

Nature—A Model of Peace

In the present world the root cause of most of our problems is traceable to our deviation from the peaceful model of nature — the best model for us to follow. All the dilemmas we are facing today arise because we have not followed nature's lead.

The stars and planets are in continual motion in their orbits, but they never collide with one another. This serves to show man how to proceed to his destination in life without coming into conflict with others. The sun too is an excellent model. It shows us how we should give life to others in a totally indiscriminating way. The tree is also a shining example to man, in supplying healthy and beneficial oxygen in exchange

for harmful gas, that is, carbon dioxide. And just look at how the flowers spread fragrance all around, regardless of whether they are appreciated for it or not. A flowing stream is likewise a model when it irrigates the fields without expecting anything in return. Without the inculcation of these altruistic values among human beings, no meaningful life on earth is possible.

In short, positivity prevails throughout Nature. Negativity just does not exist in the natural world. This teaches us the lesson that we should give a positive response at all times, even in negative situations.

Christ has exhorted us to follow Nature's example in these divine words: 'Our Father in Heaven! Hallowed be Your name, Your Kingdom come, Your Will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven.' (Matthew 6:10)

The Beautiful World of Nature

In this world, positive living is not of relevance solely to moral behaviour. Rather, it is incumbent upon us to follow a positive course at all times and in all situations. For, in this vast universe, there is only our tiny earth on which human beings may survive. To date, there is no other spot in the cosmos where we have discovered life-supporting systems. Preserving Nature, therefore, is synonymous with

sustaining life, while destroying Nature will lead to total extinction. In short, consistently engaging in positive living amounts to saving life, while failing to do so is a certain way of committing suicide.

This beautiful world of nature created by God is well on its way to being ruined by man. Widespread violence, ecological disturbance and global warming have together become a menace greater than that of a third world war. Indeed, it is as if a third world war has already been thrust upon us. This is the biggest threat we are facing today. We have to work unitedly and sincerely to save Nature in the interest of all of humanity.

The Home of Peace

The religious viewpoint on this subject is very aptly conveyed in the Quran in the following statement:

“God calls to the Home of Peace.”(10:25) This means that according to the creation plan, peace and harmony should prevail in human society. God Himself is peace. He intended this world to be peaceful, and only a peaceful world will be able to receive His blessings.

A peaceful world is like a paradise on earth. It is only in such a world that we can meet and establish

contact with God Almighty, the Creator of Man and the universe.

Nature was a paradise on earth, but man is turning it into hell. We should bear in mind that Nature, a source of spirituality, is God's language: it teaches us the lesson of peace and harmony. It is the source of life to all mankind, and as such, the destruction of Nature means the destruction of mankind. Nature is a fundamental necessity for human beings, both physically as well as spiritually.

Nature and man are interdependent. We cannot think of human beings without Nature, or conversely, Nature without human beings. We have either to go on together or else perish together. Nature is in peril. We must save it with all our might.

Nuclear Arms for What?

Nuclear bombs and other destructive devices are totally against the divine scheme prevailing in the beautiful world of nature. Why then should there be the present stockpiling of nuclear arms, which is the greatest threat not only to peace but also to the very survival of mankind?

Here it should be stressed, that nuclear arms are not usable. A weapon of mass destruction like an

atom bomb can be used only once. So, Hiroshima represented a full stop— not a comma. Then why are some countries acquiring more and more nuclear bombs? The answer is that they want to maintain their status as nuclear powers. There is, however, an alternative far superior to their possessing nuclear power status.

That is, they must destroy all nuclear bombs. Such an action would lead to a peace explosion. Anyone who dared to do so, would emerge as a spiritual winner, and a moral superpower, unlike the competitors in the nuclear race, where there can be no winner.

It is a fact that being a moral superpower is on a far higher plane than being a nuclear superpower. But this kind of revolutionary step cannot be taken on a bilateral basis. It is possible only on a unilateral basis. Nuclear disarmament is not simply an act of destroying nuclear weapons. Nuclear disarmament, in actuality, is to turn a 'violent' bomb into a 'peace bomb'. It would bring about a peaceful explosion. Any nation that proves bold enough to take this peace initiative would apparently lose its status of nuclear power. But at the same time, it would gain a far more elevated status— that of a moral or spiritual superpower. Only such a superpower can meet the need of the hour, which is to initiate the process of peace. Only this

peace 'explosion' can transform a violent world into a world where peace reigns supreme.

Peace—A Positive Behaviour

Peace is a product of a positive mental attitude, while violence is the result of negative thinking. Peace is the natural state of society: violence is an unnatural state. Peace is as much in accordance with nature's plan as violence is against it. When peaceful conditions prevail in a society all activities take place in their proper form. But if the atmosphere of peace is disturbed, the normal functioning of society is disrupted. This law applies to man, as well as to the entire universe. According to the scheme of nature, peace is the only secret of smooth functioning in human society as well as in the rest of the universe. Peace, therefore, is such a basic requirement of man, that it is crucial to maintain it in all situations. Without peace there can be neither development nor progress. No excuse whatsoever justifies the use of violence, in individual or national life. Regardless of how unfavourable circumstances might be, an environment of peace is indispensable. We must maintain peace unilaterally, for nothing that we desire can be achieved without it.

If we fail to establish peace, then we must face destruction in every field of life. The option for us is

not between peace and no peace, but between peace and annihilation. Without peace, there is no hope for mankind.

Spiritual Comfort

What disturbs the peaceful plan of nature is mainly traceable to the fact that people have become excessively materialistic. It is this thinking which leads to the exploitation of nature resulting in the disturbance of the peaceful plan of nature. If people opted for a path of moderation they would soon discover that if earlier they were comfortable physically, now they are comfortable spiritually. And without doubt spiritual comfort is far better than material comfort.

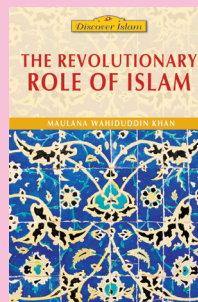
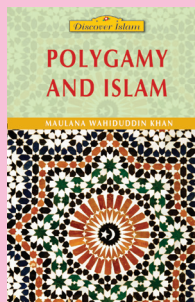
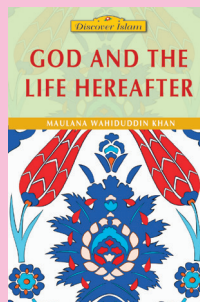
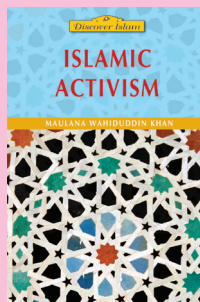
The perpetrator of violence, be he a Hitler or a common man, invariably suffers from remorse, while the peacemaker derives great satisfaction from his efforts. If one were to think of the end result, one would never indulge in violence. One should bear in mind that peace is in consonance with humanity, whereas violence means a descent to the animal level.

Peace—Man's Absolute Right

Peaceful revolution is the outcome of peaceful thinking. Peaceful minds make for a peaceful world. Man was born in peace. Man must die in peace. Peace—man's birthright—is God's greatest blessing for human beings.

Discover Islam

In this series, Maulana Wahiduddin Khan presents the fundamental teachings of Islam in a simple way. The series provides the general reader with an accurate and comprehensive picture of Islam—the true religion of submission to God.



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